

The Eagle's View

Here We Grow...Employment Readiness

What will transform the way students are trained to be employable, trim the entry time off the waiting list, and move a greater number of students through their training time more efficiently? Welcome to TRC's newly transformed pre-vocational Employment Readiness Program!

The former JOBS (Job Objectives and Behavioral Services) program served students well, but as the demand to serve more students grew, so did the waiting list and the length of time before admission to the program. Beth Dunahee, Vocational Training Services Administrator, was hired in November 2013. Her first assignment and primary goal was to evaluate the system and research ways to resolve the challenges of the current program. As a result of that research, the Employment Readiness program has evolved. "The purpose of Employment Readiness is to provide students with the tools needed to make decisions about work goals and to prepare the students for employment," Ms. Dunahee stated.

The re-structure of the program will combine the JOBS and TLS (Transitional Living Skills) programs and will incorporate the most efficient and effective aspects of both programs that have proven to produce the best outcomes in years past. By eliminating activities like contract work and placing a greater emphasis on community-based training, students will be exposed to more real life situations and live work experiences.

Here's how the program works. Employment Readiness is a 13-week program featuring a modular based training approach. With a projected capacity of 60 students, the program will have a rolling enrollment of 30 students every seven weeks. This will provide the ability to serve more students whose needs will be focused on work skill behaviors. In 2013, JOBS served approximately 144 students. Employment Readiness would allow the program to serve approximately 215 students in 12 months. Each "class" of students will begin at the same time. The modules are written to accommodate all levels of student skills. For those students who complete the modules ahead of schedule, additional skill programs will be offered prior to the end of their 13-week program. Upon entry into the program, each student will have one week of orientation and evaluation. At the end of the week, an Individual Program Plan (IPP) will be written that will develop the student's individualized

goals as they apply to the basic learning modular program. The IPP will address any academic goals along with areas that may need more or less emphasis.

The student's development of critical soft skills, self-advocacy/determination, career exploration, work-related life skills, and basic computer skills will be evaluated at various phases of the program. These will assist the student in developing work values and the skills to meet the demands of the workplace. Related Instruction (RI) services will also be provided while the student is enrolled. The RI instructor will provide academic support where needed including assistance for those working on their GED. Employment Readiness will provide opportunities for career exploration and work experience through job shadowing, internships and externships.

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Pictured left: Beth Dunahee and Christy Osborne

Program Skills Come in Handy Across Campus



Grounds Keeping doesn't mean just caring for the outside grounds plants. Students Todd Craigue (left) and Tim Meadows (right) demonstrate their plant maintenance skills as they care for a large palm in the Administration building. This "live work" project included adding potting soil and water to ensure the plant remains healthy.



With the guidance of rehabilitation assistant Ricky Gates (right), Building Maintenance students finish a drywall project in the dormitory laundry room. The project involved using their classroom skills of applying and sanding three coats of drywall compound before painting the wall to complete the project.

Pictured: (L to R) : Todd Craigue, John Fann, Josh Dowling, and Michael Grimm.

Movin' on the Music City Central



Traveling on a Music City Central bus was a "real world" experience for the Transitional Living Skills students recently. Paying their own fare, students rode the bus from LaVergne to Nashville where they toured the entire bus station complex.

Pictured at left: Chastian Minor, rehab asst. Tracy Verdun, Patrick Westmoreland, Jessie Dyer, Thomas Mannings, Ryan Bowden, Kara Bowman, Bryce Handler, and Kamern Hearn.

As part of their class activity, students learned the necessary steps to utilize the bus system if their job requires a commute. **Below left-right:** Thomas, Kamern, Jessie, rehab asst. Verdun, Bryce, Kara, Ryan, (back) and Patrick.

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The program will not utilize the token economy or the ribbon programs currently in use. Working toward a more "real world" approach, the entire campus will use "TRC Bucks." Each student will receive a TRC paycheck that can be cashed into "TRC bucks" to purchase items across the campus. Moving toward the July 7 rollout date, Beth Dunahee and Employment Readiness supervisor, Christy Osborne will schedule meetings with the VR field counselors to share the program information regarding entry criteria and the admissions process.



Impressive Student Employment Success

Recently featured in an article in the Sunday sports section of *The Tennessean* was Luther King, a Vision Impairment Services (VIS) and TRC graduate. Sports columnist Mike Organ outlined how King has overcome challenges to follow his dream of being a sports broadcaster.

“Administrators who forget to send rosters for their team, press boxes without electrical outlets, and coaches who fail to show up for pregame interviews are problems for Luther King, who broadcasts high school football games,” Organ wrote. “His blindness is not a problem.”

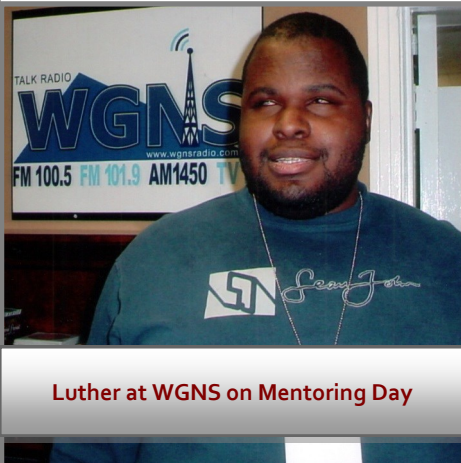
King, 28, of Nashville, is currently the play-by-play sports announcer for the Whites Creek High School Cobras, including football, boys and girls basketball, baseball, and softball.

The Tennessean story also featured video footage of King conducting pregame interviews at the school’s football stadium.

“There are always going to be some things that cause issues in any job, but I don’t consider me being blind as a disadvantage,” King told Organ. “It’s always been a dream and a goal of mine to be a broadcaster, and I have always felt that anything is possible if you’re willing to do what it takes.”



Luther King



Luther at WGNS on Mentoring Day

While a student in the VIS program, King’s VIS Instructor Karen Davis-Ahng took him

to mentoring opportunities at both WGNS radio in Murfreesboro and sports talk radio station 104.5 The Zone in Nashville. King had live, on-air time at both stations and got to meet with station management and radio personalities.

King attended the former Connecticut School of Broadcasting in Nashville following his graduation from the Tennessee School for the Blind in Donelson. In addition to his sports casting work, he also has done commercial voiceover work for the Tennessee State University Tigers and the Nashville Sounds baseball club, among others.

Previously, King has also been featured in a television news story by Rudy Kalis, sports director with NBC Nashville affiliate WSMV-TV, Channel 4. That story, along with other audio samples of King’s work, can be found at his Sportscasters Talent Agency of America page at <http://staatalent.com/client/luther-king/>.

Internship Opens Employment Door



Otto Diaz , Keith Herman, and Keith Manning

Otto Diaz was so impressed with TRC student Keith Herman’s work skills during his internship at his business establishment, OD’s Carwash, that he hired Keith on the third day of his internship.

“It’s been a great honor and a privilege to work with the young adults of the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center in Smyrna. There are many reasons why I’ve chosen to partner with this great organization. I’ve always looked for ways to give back to the community and have been seeking out said opportunities. When I was approached by Keith Manning (supervisor, Auto Maintenance/Detail), I knew I had found the right opportunity to do so.”

He added, “We not only hope to show them how to develop proper work skills in this particular service environment, but also how to work with other people. Through this, we hope that they’ll leave with a positive and fruitful work experience. I would hope other businesses would provide the same opportunities in the future.” **Pictured L-R:** Otto Diaz, Keith Herman, and Keith Manning, Auto Detail/Maintenance program instructor.

There's More Than One Way to Achieve Success



Steven Sheegog

Steven Sheegog has never let his diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) stand in his way of his success. Prior to coming to TRC, he attended East High School in Memphis, graduating with a regular diploma. Steven also attended Mid-South Community College in West Memphis, Arkansas on a part-time basis for two years to develop his computer skills.

With a solid background of determination in place while at TRC Smyrna, he successfully completed the JOBS Program on November 16, 2012. Accepted into the Grounds Keeping Program, he returned to TRC on January 7, 2013 and successfully completed that program on June 7, 2013. At TRC, he participated in Speech Therapy, Job-Seeking Skills, and Computer Application Training. While completing his training, he received instruction in job interviewing and also learned to create his resume and job applications. However, Steven's work at TRC was not yet complete. Working with the TRC Speech-Language Pathologist Martine McGroarty and Steven's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Ms. Latroyal Williamson (District #110), the purchase of an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device (iPad) was approved. Steven returned to TRC last October to attend a Modified Pre-Employment Program focusing on further enhancing his communication and work skills.

Since he has a familiarity and skill set with computers, Ms. McGroarty researched various high-tech AAC options that would enable Steven to improve his expressive communication skills. His computer savvy coupled with his visual thinking skills led his speech therapist to recommend not only the iPad, but also requested that the communication system *Proloquo2go* be purchased and downloaded on the device. Ms. Williamson, was integral in making certain he not only received the device and the special program, but that he also returned to TRC to receive the proper training of the device in order to reach his vocational potential. During his Modified Pre-Employment Training, he became adept at navigating his communication system and using his device in various functional worksite settings, such as Ace Hardware, the Smyrna Food Bank, and Pizza Hut.

Interestingly, with the addition of Steven's iPad to assist in his verbal communication, Steven started communicating more. When Steven first came to TRC, he would give minimal eye contact and would not always respond verbally when someone greeted him with a "hello." The iPad gave him the confidence to know that, if needed, he could rely on the it to communicate for him. "It was great to see Steven coming down the sidewalk from his work area on the way to lunch each day," said Becky Rhea, TRC assistant superintendent. "When I first saw Steven, I would acknowledge him with a 'Hi Steven,' and he would smile, but not respond verbally. Later, not only did Steven say 'Hi' to me, but he was the one initiating the conversation! When he saw me, he would say, 'Hi Miss Becky.' What a thrill to see such an incredible change in Steven. It's one of those things that makes your heart sing when you see the difference that TRC and its great staff and a supporting family have made in someone's life," she added.



TRC Retail Program "Under New Management"



Jackie Miller brings a total of 37 years of retail, management, and teaching experience to the new Walgreens/Retail Program in his new position as retail instructor. Miller started his retail career while still in high school working in a local convenience store and later a local grocery. He was the appliance warehouse manager for both the Paty Company and Heilig Meyers. Prior to moving to Middle Tennessee, he served in the Greene County school system as an educational assistant and facilities manager. After a move to Nashville in 2000, he worked with youth services at the Tennessee Preparatory School. After the school's closure, he worked in the Retail Sales Division with Gibson Guitar. Miller started working at TRC in August 2013 where he has served as a rehab assistant in the Warehouse and Retail Program.

Autism Awareness: How Aware Are You?

Story by: Alex Roach



Most regular people who have never heard of the media entertainment known as "anime" would simply say it is nothing more than "cartoon nonsense that is a waste of time and effort!" Most people do not know how anime came to be, or how anime affects others, especially those with autism.

The first animes were based on the dropping of the atomic bomb in Japan at the ending stages of World War II and post-nuclear societies. The 80's – full of techno, robots, and the ending of the Soviet Union – was also the era for anime because big name animes spawned fandoms (consists of all the fans of an activity) that are still growing to this day. But it wasn't until a movie titled "Kiki's Delivery Service" became a smash hit in the 90's and touched the hearts of all ages (including the writer of this article) that anime became the booming industry that it is.

In anime, there is always a story about one person who is alone who doesn't feel they have a purpose until that person makes a friend. As the friendship begins to grow, it shows how friendship is a great bond that makes your life meaningful and purposeful. In Pokémon, for example, the main character is alone at first going through so many hardships and havoc until he meets a friend.

Autism is a type of neurological disorder that impacts someone's ability to interact socially – the way they speak, the way they act, and finally, the way their body movements speak. They could be twitchy, not move at all, or be rude, which could make people think they are juvenile delinquents. It makes it hard to have friends.

For those who have autism, anime helps them forget about the hardships they have in their lives and escape to a world of fantasy, fun, and adventure. For those with higher-functioning autism, watching anime also improves understanding of social skills that could be very beneficial to them. For example, like in anime, you could see someone alone and depressed and find out they have no friends. You could be that one person that is their shining light in their depression.

In conclusion, anime has made me laugh. It has shown me that with a little hard work, you can achieve great things in your life as well as make great friendships along the way. It has shown me the importance of friendship. Though friendship may be difficult initially for me, I have come to know that it is worth the effort. As portrayed in "Kiki's Delivery Service," no matter how big or how small you are, you can achieve great things.

TRC Welcomes New Staff

Beth Dunahee: Vocational Training Services
Administrator
Christy Bishop: TBI Program Supervisor
Monica Shaw: Nurse Assistant
Sheri Anderson: VIS Rehab Instructor
Frank Lehr: VR Safety Coordinator
Faith Bennett: RN

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF
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Mission Statement

Tennessee Rehabilitation Center-Smyrna offers person-centered comprehensive services in a supportive learning environment to individuals with disabilities to increase independence and employment potential.

Organizational Values

Because we value our students:

*We are considerate
We are knowledgeable
We are resourceful and creative
We are flexible and adaptable
We are committed to excellence
We are leading by example
We are attentive and responsive to students' needs
We are making a POSITIVE difference*